

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 IGA-02 EB-11 AGR-20 OMB-01 IO-13

DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 RSR-01

(ADP) W

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P 170245Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2623

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 8573

FOR STATE/AID

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: EGEN, EAID, CB

SUBJ: RICE FROM BATTAMBANG

REF: PHNOM PENH 8509

1. AS REPORTED REFTEL, THE MOVEMENT OF RICE FROM BATTAMBANG TO PHNOM PENH IS BECOMING BOGGED DOWN AS THE TWO MAIN PURCHASING AGENCIES, SORAPA AND SATRAR, HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO INDUCE LOCAL MERCHANTS IN BATTAMBANG TO SELL THEIR STOCKS. THE LOCAL RICE MERCHANTS, WITH TACIT SUPPORT OF THE BATTAMBANG GOVERNOR, CONTINUE TO HOLD STOCKS IN ANTICIPATION THAT ALREADY ADEQUATE PROFITS WILL PERHAPS BE DOUBLED OR TRIPLED AT A LATER DATE. AS THE GOVERNOR CONTINUES TO BE THE KEY TO THE RELEASE OF MORE RICE, THE AMBASSADOR SENT TODAY AUGUST 16 THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO LON NOL.

"AS YOU RECALL, APPROXIMATELY A MONTH AGO YOU SENT A TELEGRAM TO THE GOVERNOR OF BATTAMBANG REQUESTING HIS ASSISTANCE IN ASSURING THAT A MINIMUM OF 20,000 M/T OF RICE BE PURCHASED AND TRANSPORTED TO PHNOM PENH. SINCE THAT TIME SOME 12,000 M/T OF RICE HAVE BEEN SHIPPED TO

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PHNOM PENH, WHICH REPRESENTS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD

THAT GOAL.

ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THE REMAINING 8,000 M/T OF BATTAMBANG RICE (OR RICE EQUIVALENT IN PADDY) COULD BE BROUGHT TO PHNOM PENH WITHOUT ENDANGERING SUPPLIES OF RICE NEEDED FOR THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN POPULATION IN THE BATTAMBANG AREA. I AM ADVISED, HOWEVER, THAT SORAPA AND SATRAR ARE ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES IN COMPLETING PURCHASES OF RICE IN BATTAMBANG AND THAT LITTLE ADDITIONAL RICE WILL BE BROUGHT TO PHNOM PENH UNLESS VIGOROUS ACTION IS TAKEN BY THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES IN BATTAMBANG.

AS YOU ARE AWARE, OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS SIGNED ANOTHER P.L. 480 AGREEMENT ON AUGUST 13 UNDER WHICH WE WILL SUPPLY YOU ANOTHER 35,000 M/T OF RICE FROM U.S. STOCKS. THIS IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER. IT IS BEING PROVIDED IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THE KHMER REPUBLIC IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO MEET ITS OWN ICE NEEDS. THE FURTHER SHIPMENT OF BATTAMBANG RICE TO PHNOM PENH WILL BE CRUCIAL TO THE MAINTENANCE OF AN ADEQUATE STOCK LEVEL IN THE CAPITAL UNTIL THIS NEW P.L. 480 RICE ARRIVES. MAY I THEREFORE URGE YOU ONCE AGAIN TO INSTRUCT THE GOVERNOR OF BATTAMBANG TO ASSIST IN THE PROCUREMENT AND SHIPMENT OF 6,000-8,000 M/T OF RICE TO THE CAPITAL.

I AM ADVISED THAT THE NEED FOR RICE IN PHNOM PENH IS SUFFICIENTLY GREAT TO WARRANT EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES, INCLUDING THE REQUISITION OF STOCKS (AGAINST ADEQUATE COMPENSATION) TO MEET REQUIREMENTS."

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